

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
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INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2847

FOR HA/CARLIN (DEPT)
DEPT ALSO FOR EA/OAKLEY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES - TRANSIENT HOLDING CENTER IN THE
PHILIPPINES

1. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME RELUCTANCE TO CONCUR IN A
UNHCR APPROACH TO THE PHILIVQINE GOVERNMENT TO REQUEST
A TRANSIENT HOLDING CENTER FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ALREADY
APPROVED FOR THE UNITED STATES PROGRAM. OBVIOUSLY, THERE
ARE A NUMBER OF CONSIDERATIONS WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED OTHER
THAN REFUGEE POLICY IF SUCH AN APPROACH WERE MADE BY THE
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. WHEN THE PROPOSAL WAS BROACHED
IN GENEVA BY THE UNHCR, LOWMAN MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE BELIEVED
IT UNLIKELY THAT THE USG WOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE ON SUCH
A PROPOSAL AND, INDEED, WHILE SUPPORTING THE IDEA IN PRINCIPLE,
UNLIKELY THAT THE USG WOULD BE PREPARED TO MAKE A FOLLOW-UP
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APPROACH SUPPORTING SUCH AN UNHCR INITIATIVE. THE UNHCR, HOW-
EVER, IS NOT ASKING THAT WE PLAY SUCH A ROLE. THEY DO WANT
ASSURANCES THAT WE CONSIDER IT A DESIRABLE MOVE AND THAT,
IF SUCH A CAMP WERE ESTABLISHED, THE UNITED STATES WOULD
BE PREPARED TO FINANCE ITS OPERATION.

2. GIVEN THE LIKELY CONTINUATION OVER THE NEXT MONTHS OF A

HIGH OUTFLOW OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES, SUBSTANTIALLY EXCEEDING THE NUMBER OF RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE, IT BECOMES EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO INCREASE THE CAMP CAPACITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO MEET THIS DEMAND PARTLY THROUGH THE EXPANSION OF CAMP FACILITIES IN MALAYSIA. GROWING MALAYSIAN SENSITIVITIES, HOWEVER, MAKE IT VERY DESIRABLE TO SHIFT A PART OF THIS BURDEN ELSEWHERE IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. THUS, IT WOULD APPEAR DESIRABLE TO ENCOURAGE THE UNHCR TO PROCEED WITH SUCH AN INITIATIVE.

3. IN THE PAST, THE UNHCR HAS NOT BEEN NOTABLY FORWARD IN MATTERS PERTAINING TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO GENEVA, LOWMAN FOUND A SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IN THE GENERAL TONE IN WHICH INDOCHINESE REFUGEE MATTERS WERE DISCUSSED BY UNHCR SENIOR STAFF. THOUGH MADE UP OF MANY SMALL INSTANCES, THE CHANGE WAS SUFFICIENTLY STRIKING THAT IT SEEMS LIKE TO REFLECT A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE BY THE NEW HIGH COMMISSIONER. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF THE FIRST TWO INITIATIVES IN THIS AREA TO BE PROPOSED BY THE UNHCR (I.E. THE PHILIPPINE TRANSIENT CENTER AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION FROM THE SRV) WERE TO BE DISCOURAGED BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. NEITHER INITIATIVE MAY BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT THE AIMS OF BOTH ARE DESIRABLE AND CERTAINLY THE INTEREST OF THE UNHCR IN DEVELOPING SUCH INITIATIVES IS TO BE ENCOURAGED.

INGRAHAM

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